

National Cultural Policy Submission

Left Bank Co

Submitted: On behalf of a for-profit arts business

What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you? Feel free to respond to any or all pillars:

First Nations

High quality, relevant and contemporary First Nations cultural practice is one of the core elements international visitors want to experience. At the moment, our efforts in this area are too timid and perhaps siloed into 'Indigenous' vs. non-Indigenous to create a level playing field. This misses the opportunity to create a contemporary dialogue as Australians. There are amazing creators in every creative discipline from a First Nations background and the focus tends to be on visual and performance arts rather than a broader creative industries approach.

A Place for Every Story

Left Bank Co thinks this principle potentially contradicts the essence of principle 3 which is about excellence. Inclusivity and excellence can work against one another and we need to make sure that policies and initiatives don't work across purposes. Policies that support excellence can exclude participation in creative production, equally policies that support inclusivity can take much needed resources away from organisations performing at a commercial and international level. The solution is to fund both better rather than making a choice.

The Centrality of the Artist

From our experience as a leading creative industries consultancy, the focus on the artist as completely substitutable with 'creative' is limiting and doesn't support the whole range of creative professions that add value to the national economy. There is a long-standing definitional debate here over what are the creative industries and what skills and occupations are included under that banner. In Left Bank Co's view, creative industries is a much more complete approach that is more in line with multi-disciplinary approaches that are expanding in contemporary creative practice. What is worthwhile in this pillar is understanding that without creatives, there is no culture therefore we need to lean on the conditions that make creative professions viable including the major issue of access to affordable and tenure-secure workspace for creative activity. There is no creative employment lands strategy in any Australian State despite creative industries representing up to 7 or 8% of the working population. This would be unthinkable in other sectors of the economy and we can't expect the creative sector to thrive without space to work in.

Strong Institutions

This headline is a misnomer with regards to the intent of the principle. The idea that the cultural sector is represented by institutions only is a big problem and emblematic of very old world thinking of models of cultural policy. Institutions have a role to play but much cultural economic value is created beyond these and in fact, institutions end up being the focus of capital and operational funding to the exclusion of anything that happens outside of this. The real focus of the pillar is this idea that the creative and cultural sector has a role to play and value to add across the whole economy and isn't a charity sector that operates only on a deficit model. This thinking urgently

needs to be modernised to reflect the true value created by the creative economy across the whole economy, in particular the knowledge and visitor economies.

Reaching the Audience

Left Bank Co believes there is a lot of work that needs to be done regarding the development of a globally competitive Australian creative and cultural export brand. International audiences don't relate to Australian states as they've never heard of them and are unlikely to relate to products that are state-branded even if that is how they are funded. This internal competition between states is really counter productive and taking small parochial thinking to the global stage. The channels don't drive the engagement, the content does.

Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why. Feel free to respond to any or all that are applicable to you:

First Nations

The demand for this is increasingly clear and we need to be able to elevate, promote and develop all sorts of First Nations creativity as part of a national focus. This is important to our business as we constantly identify unmet demand for this and unclear processes and protocols to garner Indigenous participation.

A Place for Every Story

We need to ensure that creative pathways are available to people from many backgrounds. Research from the City of Sydney's wellbeing survey indicates that people in the creative industries as primary employment are financially supported by someone else. This means that while Australia becomes more diverse, the creative professions is becoming more white, older and more middle class. This is a problem and access to training and space are critical to changing this.

The Centrality of the Artist

Focusing on the creative sector and the conditions that will make them successful including creative employment lands approach that safeguards affordability and security of tenure. Understanding the artist's livelihood (not survival) and how that plays into workspace demand is core to our business.

Strong Institutions

While institutions are important, we are very much in favour of strengthening the sector in terms of value of output, contract opportunities and supply chain development. There are no institutions without content and experiences to share.

Reaching the Audience

As a business that prides itself on international dialogue and exchange, we feel that Australian exports are still undercooked and missing many opportunities. We would like to continue to build bridges between Australian creators and overseas audiences to ensure there is a strong link there.

Are there any other things that you would like to see in a National Cultural Policy?

Left Bank Co. has invested the past five years in working in thought leadership and capacity building to identify property models that make creative workspace affordable and tenure secure on the long-term. We have worked with the City of Sydney, the City of Melbourne, Creative Vic and Create NSW

and with the property development sector to identify ways in which creative space can be supplied sustainably. The big sticking point is the definition of affordability. For some, this is a discount on market rates, for others, it's a percentage of creative wages that they can dedicate to workspace. In the absence of a formal definition of affordability, we have no hope of actually delivering consistently affordable workspace. The Creative Land Trust in London has invested in creative an affordability index and is stress-testing it with global economic developments including inflation, property market booms, etc. Australia desperately needs a methodology to define and assess affordability of creative workspace. This needs to be based on up-to-date data that is locale-dependent. The framework should help frame discussions with space developers and embed REALISTIC return figures into their feasibilities. It is essential we stop skirting around this issue and just hope that creatives find places to do their work, which more and more will be away from city centres, thus draining the benefits of the creative economy to the knowledge and visitor economy. Left Bank Co has the opportunity to partner with world-leading researchers and organisations to bring frameworks back to Australia to help define affordability and better serve the creative sector.